



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 May 2023

by Juliet Rogers BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 May 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/D1265/D/22/3312485

Astra, Park Farm to Brace of Pheasants, Plush, Dorset DT2 7RJ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Darren Hall against the decision of Dorset Council.
 - The application Ref P/HOU/2022/04135, dated 4 July 2022, was refused by notice dated 4 November 2022.
 - The development proposed is described as 'replace a two Bay Garage with a new three Bay Garage with first-floor accommodation'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the setting of the listed building.

Reasons

3. The appeal property, known as Astra, is a Grade II listed building. Therefore, I am required by Sections 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
4. From the evidence before me, including the listing description, and my observations during my site visit, I consider the significance/special interest of the listed building to be largely derived from the modest height of the cottage combined with its whitewashed walls and thatched roof. Set back from the road and screened by a wooded area and dense vegetation, the cottage is located within a glade enclosed by substantial mature trees.
5. Positioned on the other side of the driveway from the cottage, the external materials of the existing two-bay garage comprise rendered walls, timber doors, cladding and window frames, and a corrugated sheet gable roof. During my site visit, I observed the garage was in poor condition, being overgrown with moss and ivy, with damage to the timber cladding and discolouration to the rendered walls. As such, although largely hidden by the vegetation, the garage detracts from the setting of the listed building.
6. The proposed development would replace the existing structure with a three-bay garage plus accommodation above. Due to the accommodation in the roof, the ridge height of the proposed garage would be significantly higher than the

existing structure. Although its principal elevation would be set back slightly from the front building line of the existing structure, the proposed garage would be visible in the same view as the cottage when moving along the driveway, irrespective of the bend in the drive. Combined with its height, the more elaborate roofscape and the change in levels between the drive and the cottage, the proposed development would not be subordinate to the existing dwelling, irrespective of the distance between the two buildings. Overall, the proposed development would be a prominent feature in the rural setting of the cottage and, consequently, would not preserve the setting of the listed building, even if it were to be constructed with matching materials.

7. In the terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), the proposed development would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset. As advised by paragraph 202 of the Framework, less than substantial harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the development.
8. The removal of the existing garage, which is in poor condition, would have a positive visual impact on the setting of the listed building. I attach moderate weight to this public benefit. However, any improvements to the amount and quality of storage space would be of private benefit to the appellant. Overall, the modest public benefits would not outweigh the great weight to be given to the harm to the heritage asset and the proposed development would conflict with the Framework.
9. I conclude that the proposed development would not preserve the setting of the listed building and it would conflict with policies ENV4 and HOUS6 of the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan (the Local Plan). These policies, respectively, support the Framework's approach to the justification of harm to a heritage asset and seek to avoid development which is not subordinate in scale and proportions to the original dwelling. I also find conflict with Policy 12 of the Piddle Valley Neighbourhood Plan which requires development to have regard to the character of the surrounding area to which it relates, in terms of scale and massing, amongst other things.

Other Matters

10. The appeal site is located within the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Although the Council's Officer Report state that the proposed development would be inconsistent with Policy ENV1 and cause harm to the dark skies of the AONB, this was not included on the decision notice as a reason for refusal. As I am dismissing the appeal on the main issue above, I have not found it necessary to consider such matters any further.
11. My attention has been drawn to a recent planning permission¹ for a single-storey extension to the cottage and a replacement garage on the site. As there is a greater than a theoretical possibility that the garage approved as part of this planning permission could be constructed, regardless of the outcome of this appeal, it represents a fallback scenario to which I attach substantial weight.
12. Whilst the approved garage also comprises three bays, the fundamental difference between the approved and appeal schemes relates to the first-floor

¹ Council ref: P/HOU/2021/04405 dated 10 February 2022

accommodation. The simple design of the approved scheme, combined with the marginally higher ridge height than the existing garage, results in a feature which is subordinate to the existing cottage. Therefore, even though the proposed garage would have the same footprint area and be sited in a similar location, it would be significantly more harmful than the approved scheme.

Conclusion

13. The proposed development conflicts with the development plan when considered as a whole, and there are no material considerations, either individually or in combination, that outweigh the identified harm and associated development plan conflict. Therefore, I conclude the appeal should be dismissed.

Juliet Rogers

INSPECTOR